



FIRST UNITARIAN  
CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY  
**BR**  **KLYN**  
A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

**2015-2016 Annual Report**

## Senior Minister - Ana Levy-Lyons

This year we began the vital work of implementing the Forward Plan adopted by the congregation last spring. I have begun to organize my work around the spirit and five goals of the Plan. Because worship services, which are a central focus of my ministry, often address several of the goals simultaneously, I'll give an overview here of worship before breaking down the rest of our programming by Forward goal.

This has been an exciting year for worship at First U. Regular Sunday attendance has risen to between 200-250, with well over 500 on Christmas Eve and 325 on Easter. The program staff has worked together beautifully as a creative team, orienting the sermon, music, wisdom stories, and rituals around a common message and vision each week. As Adam Podd notes in his report, the choir has also grown significantly. It has become a real locus of joy in the congregation. The music throughout the year has been diverse, ambitious, and moving, with a wide range of genres and instrumentation. Adam often writes his own arrangements to tailor music for our choir. Our lay worship leaders have been excellent this year – Samira Kawash, John Lenker, Alan Derevensky, Waciuma Wanjohe, Lynn Chandhok, and Justin Parkinson. They've set a warm, welcoming tone, helped keep the services flowing smoothly, and offered insightful homilies. Volunteers and I worked with them throughout the year to hone their writing and presentation skills. We also had some exciting guest preachers this year, including Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams.

A highlight of worship this year has been the Seven Days of Creation series coinciding with the jazz service on the second Sunday of each month. We've explored progressive spiritual perspectives on this Biblical text through sermons, through jazz, through children's stories, and a special Children's Chapel on each of these Sundays. We invited the community to participate through multimedia responses – a visual art show was hung in the Chapel each month, themed according to each "day" of creation (many thanks to Brandi Martin, Bryn Sumner, and Jeannie Wing for hanging these shows.) Lilla LoCurto and Bill Outcault created a powerful art installation for the Sixth Day service and Andrea Parkinson is choreographing a liturgical dance piece for the Seventh Day.

### Goal: Promote spiritual exploration, development and practice

- **Small Group Ministry** – Each month participants in SGM groups discussed their relationship to themes of a sermon from the previous month. I wrote curricula for these sessions designed to help people delve into their sense of spirituality and articulate their spiritual journey.
- **Credo Workshop** – Meagan Henry and I led a four-session workshop to help participants develop their own understandings of theology and write faith statements. The workshop required advance registration and a commitment to attend all sessions. The participants were so energized and engaged by this exploration that they are continuing on their own as a Small Group using the UUA "Build Your Own Theology" curriculum.
- **Spiritual Parenting Series:** In September I led a discussion group for about 15 parents on the topic of "Creating UU Home Rituals."
- **Reflections With Rev. Ana:** This ongoing monthly vegan potluck for young adults (TNT's) was themed this year on the Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism. We discussed one each month, along with a check-in and social time.
- **Sabbath Sunday:** We continued this bi-monthly tradition this year with the help of the Sabbath Forward team. One programming highlight was a panel discussion with Sabbath-keepers from three different religious traditions: Mormon, Jewish, and 7<sup>th</sup> Day Church of God. They spoke of their common experiences and the joys and challenges of keeping a Sabbath. Please see Garnett Losak's report for more details on our Sabbath Sunday programming.
- **Newcomer Orientations:** Garnett Losak and I hosted monthly information sessions for newcomers. I cover Unitarian Universalist history and theology; Garnett covers membership, governance, programming, and the history of First Unitarian.

### Equip people with the skill and confidence to become change makers

- I am participating in a Forward team charged with addressing this goal in its entirety. The group is so energized about this work that they have committed to meet twice monthly for the foreseeable future.
- **Meeting Facilitation Skills:** In November, Jeff Levy-Lyons led a workshop for board members and committee chairs in productive meeting facilitation.
- After the rash of terrorist attacks worldwide this winter, the program staff and I held a **“Prayer Circle for a Grieving World”** as a space for members and friends to express feelings in response to the violence and vitriol in the news. Afterwards we wrote cards and collected donations for a local center for Muslim youth.
- I’ve accepted an invitation to join the **Interfaith Leadership Council** of the Network of Spiritual Progressives – an organization working to ground progressive politics in spiritual and religious principles. This group of clergy shares strategies for empowering congregations around justice work.

### Cultivate a caring, welcoming community that models a just and loving world

- **Identity Groups:** Please see Garnett Losak’s report for details on this important program.
- **Daytime Discussion Group:** This is a group I started this year for retired and/or non-traditional schedule people. We discuss a different topic each month, ideally one with both personal and universal application, based on a reading provided by a volunteer.
- **Pastoral Care in the Chapel of All Faiths:** This is a program of the Pastoral Care Committee in which a specially trained member of the Committee is available after services in the Chapel of All Faiths to offer pastoral care and make appropriate referrals for people in distress.

### Become an environmentally responsible congregation

- I preached on environmental themes several times this year and invited guest preachers, including **Fletcher Harper** (Executive Director of Greenfaith) and UU environmental activist **Tim DeChristopher**.
- The **Ethical Eating Forward Team** has been staffed and will have our first meeting in May. We are charged with the task of “promoting ethical eating and food justice” in our congregation and wider communities.
- Several members and friends of First U and I participated in the NYC Climate March on Nov. 29, the beginning of the Paris Climate Conference.

### Develop and responsibly manage congregational resources

- Staffing:
  - I worked with the Standing Committee to assemble a search committee for our new **Sexton** position and will participate in final interview rounds.
  - **Kevin Jagoe** will be our new ministerial intern on staff for the next two program years. Kevin is a gifted and down-to-earth student at the UU seminary Meadville Lombard. His work will focus on adult education, pastoral care, and stewardship. His stipend is being paid through a generous grant by an anonymous member of First U.
  - **Shari Halliday-Kwan**, a Union Theological Seminary student, will be our field education seminarian next year, working primarily with Meagan Henry in Religious Education. Her position is being funded by a generous grant from the Women’s Leadership Alliance.
  - In June, I will write performance evaluations for each of my direct reports, Garnett Losak, Meagan Henry, and Adam Podd, based on goals (supporting the Forward Plan) we worked together to set at the beginning of the year.
- I am serving on the Forward team looking at **stewardship and development**. We are striving to think outside the box and research ways to increase income. We are discussing the challenges of burnout in our volunteer fundraising leadership.
- I participated actively in this year’s stewardship campaign through a stewardship sermon and speaking to members on conference calls and the stewardship luncheon.

## Life Cycle Ceremonies

- September 20: Memorial service for Tamah Kuchynskas.
- September 27: Memorial service for Leonard Bergquist.
- September 27: Baby dedication for Henry Thebus (David Thebus and Laurel Hesch's son) using our holy water for the first time.
- October 18: Wedding of Katie Falzetta (Garnett's daughter) and Jason Murray and baby dedication for Simon Murray.
- Dec. 13: Baby dedication for Madelein Olivia Devin, daughter of Alexa Devin
- March 20: Rev. Paul Ratzlaff's memorial service. Many UU clergy were in attendance.
- April 17: I participated in Rev. Orlanda Brugnola's memorial service at Community Church and several First U members spoke as well.
- April 20: Interment ceremony for Rev. Orlanda Brugnola at First U's "Vista Hill" in Greenwood Cemetery.
- May 1: Baby/ Child Blessing for Julia, Simone, and Calla Beazley

## Publications:

- My articles, "The Innocence of God" (Spring 2016), "First Comes Love" (Winter 2016), "The Audience of the Future" (Fall 2015), and "Lessons from the Shadow Side of Football" (Summer 2015) were published as part of my "Building the Religious Counterculture" column in *Tikkun* magazine where I am a contributing editor.
- My Letter to the Editor on the religious imperative to welcome Syrian refugees was published in the Nov. 19, 2015 *New York Times*. Ten other members of the Brooklyn Heights Clergy Association also signed in support.
- My sermon on the Biblical first day of creation will be published in the UU Church of the Larger Fellowship journal this summer, 2016.
- Every week, we post my sermon online and Garnett Losak drives traffic to the posts through our Facebook page. My sermon "New York Values," promoting pride in the diversity and religious pluralism of our city, has been viewed 1360 times.

## **Board of Trustees**

I begin by thanking all of the trustees, our clerk and treasurer, all of First U's staff, and Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons. Everyone has been wonderfully dedicated to the congregation and worked incredibly hard all year.

The past year has been a busy one as usual at First U. We continue to grow in membership as people find their spiritual home and community at First U. We are the exception in the United States – a growing liberal religious congregation (see Membership report).

The year has also been busy for your Board of Trustees. We set to work shortly after we were elected last spring and haven't stopped since. The Board has spent much of the year beginning the implementation of the Forward First Plan that was adopted last year, developing teams to help the congregation reach its goals. Trustee Sean Fischer has been the guiding force for implementation; see his report for details.

### **Empowering People Through:**

#### Good Organization

The Board itself has focused on improving the organizational aspects of the congregation so that our congregants can more easily take action to live out our purpose statement. We did advanced planning for congregational meetings and events. We approved policies to clarify how to handle things like weddings, child dedications, funerals/memorial services, committee budgets. We found ways to increase staff support – adding a full-time, professional sexton; a part-time ministerial intern for two years and a part-time seminarian for next year.

#### Leadership Training

In September leadership training, led by Rev. Ana, Director of Congregational Life, Garnett Losak and Board Chair Lee Pardee, was provided for all trustees and committee chairs.

#### Communication

The Board communicated frequently with the congregation through occasional “Splinters from the Board” updates through the e-newsletter and by holding congregational meetings in November and February. At our November congregational meeting congregants heard from our delegates who had attended the UUA General Assembly in Portland, OR and voted to endorse resolutions that had been passed there:

- Statement of Conscience on Reproductive Rights
- Actions of Immediate Witness on
  - Support the Black Lives Matter Movement
  - End Immigrant Child and Family Detention Now
  - Support a Strong, Compassionate Global Climate Agreement in 2015: Act for a Livable Climate

At our February Congregational meeting members elected delegates to the UU Metro NY District Annual Meeting and the UUA General Assembly and voted to purchase and display a Black Lives Matter banner on the front of the church.

#### Solid Finances

The Board continued its work of getting our financial house in order by clarifying the accounting for specialized funds in our endowment to maximize funds available for congregational use while honoring the purpose of the funds.

Over a third of the congregation's annual revenue comes from pledges and donations from members and friends of First U. This year we have had great financial success. Our stewardship campaign was able to increase total pledging by over 10% (see the report from the Stewardship Team). And all of our fundraising events have met or exceeded their goals. As a result, we have been able to purchase new tables for our many congregational events, buy video equipment that is improving our online presence, and start a kitchen upgrade. Many of our fundraising events were also wonderful, fun, community-building events as well: Jazz and Pie in the fall, our annual UniFair in December, the spring Cabaret and our superbly re-invigorated Auction in April. Many thanks to all the volunteers who contributed so much time and talent to these events.

Another third of our income comes from leases and rentals. Thanks to our terrific office staff – Rob Petrillo and Garnett Losak, we have doubled our rental income this year. And thanks again to Rob and also to past board president Carolyn Ellis, we renewed good leases with our day care tenant and one apartment tenant.

And then there have been unexpected gifts of generosity. We received several bequests, including one from our beloved Ari Hoogenboom, Sr. And then we received a big surprise gift of \$25,000 from Elaine Macken to replace the floor in the chapel this June. Thank you Elaine!

### **Work for Social Justice and Stewardship of the Earth**

The Board had the pleasure this year of approving several proposals in this area.

The Board approved Rev. Ana's fellowship with GreenFaith, an organization that trains religious leaders to turn houses of worship into environmental leaders. This fellowship is developing Ana's skills to help the congregation fulfill its mission of working for stewardship of the earth.

We also approved a plan for a congregation-wide, Weaving the Fabric of Diversity (WFD)-led project partnering with formerly homeless women veterans next year.

And at our March congregational meeting, the Board proposed that we display a Black Lives Matter banner in the front of the church. This proposal was passed by the congregation.

### **Challenges**

The year has not been all good news. Last spring, we had hoped to hire a full-time, professional sexton, but we were unable to find a candidate for the compensation we could offer. Fortunately, our long-time member, Paul Eisemann, agreed to take on a portion of the work in the position of Maintenance Manager. We were managing pretty well under this arrangement until Paul severely injured his hand in October. Although he is healing, Paul was unable to continue to fulfill his position after that time. The board subsequently reaffirmed its decision of the preceding year that the congregation needs a full-time, professional sexton to manage our building complex. Paul and the Board have come to an agreement, and he will be moving out of the church's 50 Monroe Place apartment at the end of May so that a new full-time, professional sexton can move in.

## Plans for next year

A concern of the Board is that much of the congregation's energy is used for fundraising efforts, which leaves much less than we would wish for fulfilling our mission. The board will take a hard look at how we raise the funds needed for providing the worship services, religious education and programs that we all value. I am confident that we will find ways to do this that frees us to grow spiritually, care for one another, and work for social justice and stewardship of the earth.

In faith and fellowship,

Lee Pardee  
Chair, Board of Trustees

Trustees:

<u>Term Ending 2016</u>	<u>Term Ending 2017</u>	<u>Term Ending 2018</u>
Elaine Macken	Liz Davis	Roger Cooper
Rachel Michael	Mary Most	Sean Fischer
Jeff Muller/James Goward	Kurt Steele	Lee Pardee

Clerk: Sarah Morgan  
Treasurer: Mitch Major/Lake Wise

## Director of Congregational Life – Garnett Losak

This June I will have completed 3 full years on the staff of First Unitarian. I work with a tremendous, hardworking, collaborative team whose dedication to our congregation is beyond question. Each of us brings our individual gifts to our work with respect for the whole. These years have truly been some of the most rewarding in my professional life.

### Membership

2015-2016 has been a banner year. As of the annual meeting we will have welcomed 32 new members, plus 7 in June of 2015. So far 9 people have expressed interest in signing the membership book on June 5<sup>th</sup>, our last new member Sunday of the year. The total membership reported to the Unitarian Universalist Association in February was 257, an increase of 39 or 18% over the previous year.

Membership growth can be attributed to several factors: great worship, excellent religious education for children and youth, rewarding programming and a welcoming, friendly congregational culture. In addition, it is critical to have a system that insures that by-law requirements (such as the completion of pledge forms) are followed and guides prospective members through the process from completing a welcome card, through signing the membership book. Thanks to the support of volunteers, Marty Bernstein who diligently provides name tags to all of our newcomers, Sarah Morgan, who follows up with young adults, Dawn Brekke, small group ministry follow-up, Pat Bernstein, data processing and the work of the membership committee, we continue to upgrade our systems and processes to make sure that we attend to all newcomers appropriately. (See more about membership activities in the Membership Committee Report).

Membership is only one of several metrics we use to measure congregational success, please see committee and staff reports for information on religious education enrollment, worship and program attendance, and financial stewardship.

### Communication

The E-News and Order of Service continue to be our primary methods of internal communication. The E-News is sent to 950 addresses each week and we regularly print 250 orders of service which include announcements. Our Facebook page has 1,056 fans and growing and our Twitter account, still a work in progress, has over 100 followers. The website is updated every Sunday afternoon to promote the following week's worship. In addition, we are using the website more deliberately as a repository for policies, meeting documents, directories (which are now updated quarterly) and other notices and documents as needed. I thank the congregation for its continued respect for submission deadlines.

I worked closely with the Auction Committee, The Unifair Committee and the Stewardship Team to promote and administer these programs.

### Programming

Sabbath Sundays continued for a second year with the addition of a volunteer team to help with the planning. Unfortunately, the January Sabbath was canceled due to a snowstorm, but two others were well attended. A fourth, a picnic, is planned for June 4<sup>th</sup>. With two years behind us, the team will be discussing format tweaks for next year. Our high school youth deserve special kudos for their terrific Sabbath Sunday lunch service.

Rev. Ana and I will be leading a workshop on Sabbath Sunday at this year's Unitarian Universalist General Assembly in Columbus, OH.

I am especially proud of a series of seven Identity Groups that the staff has been hosting this spring. This program developed out of staff discussions about the challenges of growth in a diverse congregation. We decided to check in with various demographic and affinity groups within the congregation to ensure that we are aware not only of where we are succeeding, but also where we might not be meeting people's needs. Our goal was to be able to lean in to what's working and make changes based on any issues that came up. We are meeting with people from conservative religious backgrounds, people of color, LGBTQ, atheists, parents and caregivers, seniors, and young adults. To date, five groups have met with members of the staff. There were as many as 10-12 participants in each meeting. The feedback was generally very positive. Most participants reported that the congregation was welcoming and friendly and that they felt respected and "at home." There were suggestions to tighten up our liturgical language to be more inclusive (for instance the use of siblings, rather than brothers and sisters), draw more in our programming from world religions, and create a more comfortable environment in coffee hour. The overarching message was one of deep appreciation for the opportunity to be heard. At least one group is moving toward ongoing connection. The comments and suggestions we have received will be instrumental in planning worship and programming for the coming year.

Rev. Ana and I continue to offer Newcomer's Orientations on the second Sunday of the month. Lee Pardee and I also offered one session in the summer and expect to do so again in the coming year.

Early in the year I wrote and presented a training class for congregation leaders. The class was focused on administrative and building procedures, governance and staff responsibilities and was mandatory for the chair or chair-designate of every committee or program group. It was offered twice and had a total of approximately 40 attendees.



## Administration & Systems

I work very closely with our Director of Congregational Services, Rob Petrillo. He and I have tightened up some of our systems for building use, maintaining stewardship and donation records and general building and office administration.

This year I undertook several building improvements. The passthrough area between the chapel and the undercroft now has new sturdier shelving. Thank you to Paul Eisemann for starting the project and Bob Levine for completing it. Our tenants have complied with a requirement to keep materials in labeled containers and our custodians have been instructed to throw away anything that is left on the floor. I also spearheaded a plan to open up the undercroft. The daycare center toys and the folding chairs are now stored in the “alcove” (also sometimes referred to as The Emerson Room). The result is that the coat closet area is more accessible, the daycare toys are not a temptation for our children and there is more space on the window side of the undercroft for tables and chairs during coffee hour.

Rob deserves especial thanks for his hard work in developing our building as a go-to venue for performances and community events. Due to his years of hard work, we will overreach our rental budget by more than 200% this year. It should be noted that these rentals require a significant amount of logistical gymnastics. Rob handles these with calm and grace.

At the request of the Board of Trustees I developed several operating policies including ones for member rites of passage and office procedures for managing our financial systems. These policies can be found on our website.

Last summer we canceled our contract with our longtime database system, ACS, and switched to Servant Keeper as our member database and QuickBooks for bookkeeping. The new systems are adequate to our needs and have saved the congregation approximately \$1,000 annually. In addition, we canceled MailChimp, our E-News system, and switched to Emma, for a savings of \$600 per year.

I will use the bulk of my \$1,600 professional expenses to attend General Assembly in Columbus, Ohio this June.

I thank the congregation for its continued support of my position. I hope to continue to provide high quality service, system improvement and staff and Board support in the coming year.

Submitted with Love,  
Garnett Losak

## Director of Music – Adam Podd

With my second year as Music Director at First U wrapping up, I'm happy to report on the continued momentum, expansion, and strong traditions of our diverse music program. The choir continues to grow, with an average attendance of about twenty-two members. We are always happy to welcome newcomers into our special community of choral singing.

The choir has sung at every Sunday worship service, and learned dozens of new compositions and arrangements, as well as revisiting some favorites. Our mostly volunteer choir is led by a quartet of four professional section-leaders, Liz Bachman Thompson (mezzo-soprano), Candice Helfand-Rogers (soprano), Brandon Hornsby-Selvin (tenor), Wayne Arthur Paul (baritone), who are also featured soloists for special music during worship.

Our two special music services (Palm Sunday, and Christmas Eve) were great successes! Utilizing the gifts of the choir, section-leaders, and additional instrumentalists, we prepared and performed challenging and diverse programs for our music-loving community. Christmas Eve included a brass quartet, and exciting arrangements (old and new) of carols, spirituals, and choral masterworks. Palm Sunday featured an array of world percussion instruments, with the choir, for our own curated *Missa Mundi Mixta* (World Music Mass) using movements from different composers and countries to create a unique and cohesive "larger work".

One big change to the structure of our music program has been the implementation of a new monthly jazz program building on the popularity of previous years' single jazz service. Our Second Sunday Jazz Services have been exciting and well-received. By aligning Jazz to Rev. Ana's sermon series on the Seven Days of Creation, we've been able to plan ahead and curate some very meaningful, joy-filled worship services.

We were thrilled to have *The Rad Trads* as our band-in-residence each month, bringing their contagious energy and love of jazz to the whole congregation. Worship attendance has been consistently higher on Second Sundays, and our members and friends have been extremely receptive to these exciting services.

In its first year, the monthly Jazz services were a bit of an experiment. We were interested to see how realistic the added complications of instrumentalists, repertoire, and finances would play out within and around our normal structure and systems. The staff has decided to continue the program and hopefully build on the energy and momentum from year one.

The Julie McKinney Fund (JMF) has a small reserve from past years which in addition to the current year JMF donations, was used to help pay for the first year of monthly jazz services. Our goal is that a second year of Jazz Sundays will continue growing our congregation's attendance, enthusiasm, and generosity to sustain this monthly special music service entirely from new (JMF) donations.

The musical community at First Unitarian, in collaboration with the Worship and Music Committee, has also put on two major fund-raising events, Jazz & Pie (in the fall) and the Spring Cabaret. The two events raised a total of \$3,375. Special thanks to everyone who participated and attended.

Another special thanks to those who gave to the JMF this year. The total contributions were \$7,825. This is an increase from previous years. We hope donations continue to grow to sustain all of the new and exciting additions to the musical landscape that has made this past year of worship at First Unitarian so special.

Looking forward to the years, services, and songs to come,

Adam Podd  
Director of Music

## **Director of Education Ministries – Meagan Henry**

As I finish my third year serving the congregation as your Director of Education Ministries, I am grateful to report that once again we had an exciting and active year here at First Unitarian. The children and youth religious education program continues to grow. We now have 86 children and youth registered and participating in Sunday activities. I hosted a mid-year check-in with parents of children in RE and received much positive and helpful feedback. Our High School Youth Group is thriving and has two additional members since last year, for a total of twelve youth. I work closely with the Forward First Team that is envisioning a comprehensive and vibrant Adult Faith Development Program that we hope to roll out over the course of the next three to five years.

Thanks to a grant we received from the Women's Leadership Alliance, we hired a part-time Youth Ministry Coordinator, Rebecca Chin, to work five hours per week. Throughout the year, I have worked with and supervised Rebecca as she coordinated the High School Youth Group by managing their schedule of activities and advisors. In addition to leading a worship service in November, the youth have been attending regional youth conferences and participate in Sunday afternoon discussions. Our biggest project of the year is the Youth Pilgrimage to Transylvania, Romania this June 29 - July 7. The youth have spent much time learning about our Unitarian history and heritage while also conducting multiple fundraisers for their trip. Special thanks to Cooper Richey-Miller for creating a wonderful video for our on-line Generosity Campaign which has raised nearly \$7,000 for our trip as of this writing.

In addition to leading worship and preaching a few times throughout the year, I participate in worship weekly through collaboration with our staff team and in choosing and telling the Wisdom Stories. I love this part of my job, and I get much joy from finding just the right story to complement the theme of the worship. We have an excellent worship and staff team, and it is truly a pleasure to work with them.

For the remainder of my report, I have organized items according to the goals as set forth by the Forward First Plan. Much of the work I do is made possible because of the constant support I receive from the Chair of the Religious Education Council, Becky Huffman. See her report for even more information about our program this year.

### **Promote spiritual exploration, development and practice**

- Monthly Children's Chapels explored the spiritual themes in the seven days of creation.
- Children learned about and practiced a variety of types of prayer throughout the year.
- Forward First Team began creating our Adult Faith Development program. Members of the team: Drew Peterson-Roach, Waciuma Wanjohi, June Wohlhorn.
- Spiritual Parenting Discussion facilitated by Rev Ana on the theme of practicing family rituals at home.
- Taught children and adults about different religious holidays through the Winter Festival of Lights worship service.
- What We Choose: Ethics for Unitarian Universalists - co-led adult RE class with June Wohlhorn,.
- Credo Workshop for adults - co-led with Rev. Ana, see her report for more details.
- Passover Seder Service - co-led with Rev. Ana.

### **Equip people with the skills and confidence to become change-makers**

- Justice Sundays are a new initiative to engage our children in a variety of justice issues throughout the year. See Becky Huffman's report for more details.
- Year-long Our Whole Lives (OWL) class for Jr. High (7th and 8th grades) with five youth, two lead and three substitute teachers.
- Adult OWL 4-session class this Spring with 11 participants and 2 teachers.
- Preached a sermon on the Unitarian Universalist Black Lives Matter movement.

- Led service-learning trip to Haiti with members of a nearby congregation and two members of First U, Allegra Alcott and Frank Montesana.
- Coordinating worship service with Allegra Alcott and Frank Montesana on what we learned from the service learning trip to Haiti and what it means to engage with a partnership model of justice work.

### **Cultivate a caring, welcoming community that models a just and loving world**

- Participated in Identity Groups, see Garnett Losak's report for more details.
- Justice Sunday with children ages 5 - 12 in which they learned about the refugee crisis in the world and some of the causes of it. We then engaged in the activity of creating cards of welcome and support to be delivered to refugee children.
- Engaged with Interfaith clergy in Brooklyn Heights to revive the Brooklyn Heights Interfaith Youth Group (BHIYG).
- Facilitated our High School Youth Group in hosting a BHIYG event and service project to welcome and support Central American refugee children. This included the management of outside donations of supplies. This project was greatly supported by volunteer, Michele Ascione.
- Supported discussion group for parents of young children.

### **Become an environmentally responsible congregation**

- Justice Sunday with the theme of sustainability and games to teach children about recycling.
- Fully utilized an online Religious Education registration form instead of using paper forms.

### **Develop and responsibly manage congregational resources**

- Developed new systems for tracking the Religious Education Program budget and expenses.
- Facilitated the sorting, organizing, and cataloging of supplies in order to use what we already have instead of purchasing new supplies.
- Managed the timing of Youth Group fundraisers so as to avoid conflict with Stewardship Campaign.

In Fellowship,  
Meagan Henry

## **Auction – April 16, 2016**

The Undercroft was filled to capacity with a raucous, exuberant crowd supporting First Unitarian at this year's Spring Auction. An army of donors, organizers and volunteers pulled together to add over \$11,000 to the congregation's coffers. And while the success of the event can be measured in the numbers--\$\$ and a full house!--the more important and lasting success was the sense of fun and community that we created. Fundraising is but one of the goals of the auction: the organizers worked hard to make the evening memorable and entertaining, to establish a sense of welcome and inclusion, and to offer many ways to participate, all while being sure to raise a substantial amount of money.

There was something for everyone at the auction. A door prize and "penny auction" gave every ticket holder a chance to win. The silent auction featured a variety of lovely jewelry, home treasures, and crafts. Also popular, was anything delicious, including gravlax, macaroons, cupcakes, cookies and hot-from-the-oven bread. Paddles waved in the live auction for exciting experiences and services, including many never-before-offered tours, dinners, and workshops. Bidding was lively and many items far exceeded our expectations. The Podd Brothers (Adam on piano and Matt on bass) enlivened the first hour, and Bruce Wilde set up his sound system so we could enjoy music throughout the evening. We also introduced an expedited check out and shorter live auction, both of which helped the event move quickly and end on time.

The auction wasn't the only thrill of the evening. While congregants enjoyed the burrito buffet and the generous pours of Prosecco and vino, the campaign of Presidential candidate, Senator Bernie Sanders, rented the Sanctuary to hold a round table on theology and social justice with Cornel West and others. The energy was flowing upstairs and down; a very exciting night, all around!

Gratitude Roll Call:

Lead organizers: Thank you to the stalwart team who worked for months to bring the auction to life: **Samira Kawash** (event chair), **Lilla LoCurto** (donations, set up, registration), **Koren Manning** (donations, program, recording, accounting), Dave Garvoille (volunteer coordinator, floor captain, director of set up and decoration), **Garnett Losak** (publicity, event planning, food and beverage lead)

Auction Volunteers: Thank you to the tireless hands that made the event run smoothly with maximum fun for all. Auctioneers: **Tom Kennedy, Peter Norling, Lee Pardee**; Recorders and Check-out: **Koren Manning, Bruce Wilde, Mitch Major, Liz Davis, Naarah Williams, Mary Most**; Registration: **Lilla LoCurto, Brandi Martin, Koren Manning**; Silent Auction set up and recording: **Vonda Brunsting, Gabriela Hoffman**; Decoration design: **Dave Garvoille, Catalina Bertani**; Bar: **Dawn Brekke, Roger Cooper, Zach Kator**; Sound System: **Bruce Wilde**; Logo and Flyer Design: **Dieter Klipstein**; Meal prep: **Garnett Losak, Rebecca Chin, Allegra Alcott, Mike Alcott, Catie Whelan, Arielle Zagury**; Event wranglers (set up, decorating, serving, clean up): **Tom Check, Barbara Cutney, Emily Fisher, Stephanie Gannon, Georgia Larsen, Diana Lu, Emily Mathieu, Christina Negri, Luke Negri, Esmey Perales, Steve Ricketts, Jessica Sasko, Rachael Warner, Jeanie Wing, Nancy Witherell.**

Event donations: Thank you to **Dave Garvoille** for donating decorating materials and to **Roger Cooper** for donating humanely raised chicken and several bottles of wine.

Auction donors: Thank you to the generous members and friends who donated all the wonderful items and experiences: **Dale Addington, Mike and Mariasara Alcott, Pat and Marty Bernstein, Catalina and Philip Bertani, Rick Bruner, Barbara Dildine, Linda Downs, Doug Eads, Carolyn Ellis, Sara Faison, First U TnT's, Emily Fisher, Eliza Frecon and Matt Castle, Joy Gabriel, David Garvoille, Rolf Grimsted, Jaden Li Gunn, Declan Gunn, Mason Gunn, James Henry, Becky Huffman, Samira Kawash, Tom and Sharon Kennedy, Allen J. Kone, Georgia Larsen, Bob Levine, Ana Levy-Lyons, Jeff Levy-Lyons, Lilla LoCurto, Garnett Losak, Koren Manning and Naarah Williams, Florie Maynard, Sarah Morgan, Mary Most,**

Christine Negri, Connie Newsom, Peter Norling, Lee Pardee, Rita Pearl, Esmeralda Perales, Adam Podd and the FUUB Choir, Gaither Pratt, David Provost, Nancy Provost, Chelsea Saunders, Bryn Sumner, Lexi Van Valkenburgh, Margaret Von Mueller, Nancy Welles, Coco and Bruce Wilde, Jeannie Wing, Nancy Witherell, June Wohlhorn

And a big thank you to everyone who came, bid, laughed, cheered, and enjoyed the evening.

Samira Kawash, Chair  
Koren Manning  
Lilla LoCurto

## Facilities Management Committee

- Overview: The Facilities Management Committee (FMC) has worked on several projects during the current program year. Thomas Simko Design and Restoration was retained as the contractor on several projects that are intended to restore, reinforce and preserve the historic exterior doorways of the Sanctuary and several areas of the Chapel. The FMC hopes that the projects will enhance our worship and congregational life. Elaine Macken, FMC Chair, is managing the projects in consultation with architect Andrew Wright of Starboard Architects.
- Sanctuary: This project includes repairing and repainting damaged areas of the Sanctuary's three (3) exterior double wooden doors, and surrounding woodwork, which was rotting, and repair of an adjacent stone stairway, which had collapsed. This phase of the Sanctuary project is substantially complete. A final coat of paint may be applied later this spring.
- Chapel: This project includes repair of the exterior Chapel doors, repair and strengthening of two sets of wooden double doors between the chapel and the Frances White Room, and repair of a wooden door between the chapel and the Undercroft, located at the back of the chapel. The wooden door near the street entrance to the chapel, leading to the undercroft is in the process of being repaired. Repairs to two (2) sets of wooden double doors in the chapel, which lead to the Frances White Room, are well underway. Repairs to the exterior chapel doors are nearly complete.
- Chapel Sliding Doors: Progress has been made in the work to repair the double sliding doors in the Frances White Room which lead to the chapel. The repair work may be completed by opening access panels in the Frances White Room, but could also require breaking through the Chapel's plaster wall to gain access to the internal mechanisms.
- "Green it Up, Clean it Up" Clean-Up Day: The FMC and the Sustainability Work Group co-sponsored a volunteer Frances White Room (F.W.R.) Clean-Up Day on Saturday, October 3, 2015, to prepare this much-used space for fall Congregational meetings and events. The event was well-attended and also included a clean-up of some "mechanical spaces" which were accessed during the recent "Energy Audit."
- Leaded-Glass Panel Repair and Restoration: The FMC has received bids from Gil Studio for the proposed repair and restoration of the leaded-glass panels in the interior Chapel doors, and the 50 Monroe Place entrance. This proposed work is expected to be completed during the next fiscal year.
- Chapel Floor: After an area of the Chapel floor near the main exterior Chapel entrance collapsed in November, 2014, a temporary, raised beveled plywood patch was installed at that time. The area underneath the damaged area was recently repaired as new floor supports were installed.

- Chapel Floor Replacement: Special Capital Project: At the December 15, 2015 Board Meeting, FMC Chair Elaine Macken donated \$25,000 to create a restricted fund for a “Special Capital Project” to replace the entire Chapel floor. The Chapel floor replacement project is expected to begin around Wednesday, June 15, 2016 and to continue through the end of June, 2016.
- Kitchen Upgrades Year-End Appeal: The Board voted to authorize a year-end appeal to raise up to \$5,000 for kitchen upgrades to provide funding for the 2015-2016 fiscal year Maintenance Projects budget line, and to balance the Congregation’s 2015-2016 budget. The project includes a new double sink, replacement cabinets and new food preparation tables. The Kitchen Upgrade Team members are: Connie Newsom (Chair), Danny DiGiacomo, and FMC Members Liz Davis, David Thebus, and Nancy Wolf. (See Kitchen Upgrade Report)
- Fiscal Year 2015-2016: As of the date of this report, invoices submitted by Thomas Simko Design and Restoration for \$15,781.85 were charged to the Maintenance Projects budget line, for work on the projects noted above. Some work on these projects is ongoing. Invoices submitted by architect Andrew Wright, of Starboard Architects, for \$11,862.50 were charged to the Maintenance Projects budget line, for work on the projects noted above. Some of the architects’ fees will be charged to the “Special Capital Project” to replace the Chapel Floor, noted above. Furthermore, an invoice submitted by Black Lion Painting for \$5,600 for painting spaces used by the Imagine Early Learning Center, was charged to the Maintenance Projects budget line.
- Fiscal Year 2016-2017: The FMC plans to continue to work on projects during the next fiscal year which relate to the safety and preservation of our buildings, including: touch-up painting of areas of the Chapel and repair of water-damaged areas of the Chapel’s walls; painting the Sanctuary’s Vestibule floor; repair of the leaded-glass panels in the interior Chapel doors and the 50 Monroe Place entrance; implementation of some recommendations from the Congregation’s recent energy-efficiency audit; and projects required per our agreement with the Imagine Early Learning Center, our major tenant.
- The FMC generally meets on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Please contact any FMC member for more information.

Respectfully submitted,  
 Liz Davis, FMC Board Liaison  
 Elaine Macken FMC (Chair) & Board Liaison  
 Gloria Furman, David Thebus, John Pritchard, Nancy Wolf

## **Forward First Brooklyn Planning Team**

Last year, FUUB developed a strategic plan to guide its work over the next 3 to 5 years. The plan, including our overarching Statement of Purpose, was adopted by the congregation at its Annual Meeting on May 17, 2015. More information about the goals of Forward First can be found by visiting [FUUB.org](http://FUUB.org) -> Members -> Forward First Brooklyn or at [www.fuub.org/home/community/forward-first-brooklyn](http://www.fuub.org/home/community/forward-first-brooklyn).

This year, we are focusing on the implementation of the Forward First plan. A total of 14 teams were identified as necessary for carrying out the work, and of these, 12 did not exist from the outset. The Board had an ambitious goal of forming all teams and beginning work by the end of this year. Sean Fischer was identified as the Board member who would coordinate across the various teams once formed.

Of the 14 teams, 7 groups have begun their work. These teams are (in order of their appearance in the plan):

**Sabbath Practice:** Joy Gabriel, Dave Garvoille, Ari Hoogenboom, Lee Ilan, Ana Levy-Lyons, Garnett Losak

**Adult Spiritual Growth Program:** Meagan Henry, Drew Peterson-Roach, Waciuma Wanjohi, Nancy Welles, June Wohlhorn

**Welcoming Newcomers/Membership Pathways (Membership Council):** Marty Bernstein, Judy Boals, Lisa Kawamoto, John Lenker, Garnett Losak, Rachel Michael

**Congregational Leadership Development (Nominating Committee):** Mike Alcoff, Beth Evans, Koren Manning, Lee Pardee (ex officio), Coco Wilde, Nancy Witherell

**Working for Social and Environmental Justice – Leadership Development:** Tom Check, Luke Elliott-Negri, Ana Levy-Lyons, Sam McKelvie, Kurt Steele

**Ethical Eating:** Vonda Brunsting, Alex Gecker, Ana Levy-Lyons, Sarah Morgan, Bradley Young

**Stewardship and Fundraising:** Ana Levy-Lyons, Sarah Morgan, Jaye Nelia, James Rohrbach

Due to recruiting and logistics challenges, most teams began several months into the congregation year. The first step for all teams has been to craft a clear vision for their work and to begin setting short, intermediate, and long-term goals. Most teams are still building the initial planning framework, which usually takes several meetings. Once their preliminary visions are done, groups will seek additional information or feedback from the congregation, which may occur in a variety of ways depending on the nature of the work (e.g., after-service forum, targeted focus groups, meetings with key committees). We expect that some groups will begin discussions with members of the congregation before the end of this congregation year and others at the beginning of next year.

The seven teams that have not formed yet are: Care and Support, Environmental Sustainability, Staff Organization, Communications, Financial Vision, Facilities Vision, Congregation Governance.

### **Assessment of Progress and Next Steps**

We were partially successful in our goals this year. The formation of the teams was an intensive undertaking, especially when considering that many people in the congregation are already heavily committed. In hindsight, the beginning of new work across seven teams (five of which were new) was a notable accomplishment. The visions that each of these teams are crafting are both thoughtful and detailed, and we look forward to presenting these ideas to the congregation and beginning roll-out of new activities next congregation year.

Much work needs to be done. The next congregation year will focus on convening the remaining teams and finishing the planning work, including soliciting feedback from the congregation and piloting new ideas and projects. The scale of the work relative to the size of the congregation and available volunteers remains our biggest challenge, so we recognize that adaptability will be necessary as we learn from our experiences.

For additional information on Forward First, please begin by reading the information on our website. Follow-up questions may be directed to Sean Fischer at [sean.fischer@gmail.com](mailto:sean.fischer@gmail.com).

Sean Fischer – Forward First Board Liaison



## Investment Committee

The First Unitarian Congregational Society of Brooklyn's (FUUB) endowment is invested with Walden Asset Management, which provides monthly statements of the value of our portfolio and more in-depth analysis on a regular basis. Walden invests our portfolio based on the Congregation's socially responsible Investment Policy adopted at the 2012 Annual Meeting and updated at the 2015 Annual Meeting. Walden invests in both high quality, investment grade equities and bonds of U. S. based companies. The value of the endowment increased from \$3,566,231 on April 1, 2015 to 3,610,962 on March 31, 2016, representing an increase of 1.25%.

This year the board has established a policy that the FUUB's endowment value does not include the value of the Women's Alliance portion of the endowment, since these funds are not controlled by FUUB. This means all future calculations of the 4% prudent draw from the endowment will not include the Women's Alliance portion of the endowment.

For fiscal year 2015-16, the prudent draw from the endowment is \$143,500. So far in fiscal year 2015-16, \$94,500 has been drawn from the endowment. Up to another \$49,000 can be drawn from the endowment during the fiscal year 2015-16, which ends on June 30, 2016.

During the fiscal year FUUB has received three bequests totaling \$61,381.25 that were invested in the endowment. In addition, we returned \$25,000 to the endowment that had been previously withdrawn from the Flatbush Fund to donate to the Original Blessing Congregation. Finally, we invested \$7,699.25 in the endowment on a return of principal from a previous investment. A total of \$94,080.50 of additional funds was invested in the endowment in the first nine months of fiscal year 2015-16.

Walden Asset Management has managed our endowment since August 31, 2012. Since that time the annualized return on the endowment has been 8.97%. The benchmark annualized return has been 8.67% over the same time period. Expenses have been .84% annualized resulting in an 8.13% annualized return on the endowment after expenses

Before reducing performance for expenses, Walden has outperformed the benchmark by an annualized return of .3%. The benchmark includes all types of investments within the limits of FUUB's investment policy. Based on this, the investment committee believes that Walden has done a very good job.

We will provide a short report in August 2016, which will provide an update on the endowment as of the end of the 2015-16 fiscal year.

The First Unitarian Investment Policy can be read on our website. [www.fuub.org/home/members/policies/](http://www.fuub.org/home/members/policies/)

Mitch Major, Chair  
Samira Kawash

## **Kitchen Upgrade Team**

The Year End Appeal provided an opportunity to upgrade the church kitchen. \$5,000 was allocated to this project which targeted a new sink and regulation height work tables.

Before the installation of new equipment, it was necessary to install a new circuit to increase electrical service to the kitchen. The electrician also fixed the light over the stove which had been out for several years. Other issues were addressed by installing a regulation gas pipe brace, sealing holes in a lower cabinet, and scheduling the painting of the kitchen floor to prevent old lead paint from surfacing.

The kitchen project required heavy cleaning and decluttering which was done during two full work days by volunteers with the help of custodian, Carl Davis. The cabinets were washed inside and out and all their contents, washed, reorganized and returned. Everything that didn't belong in the kitchen was sent to more appropriate areas, recycled, saved to sell at UniFair, or discarded, such as the four inoperable fans. Two dozen florist vases were returned to an appreciative florist. A tarnished candle snuffer found with the flatware was polished and sent to the Silent Auction where it earned \$50!

We are grateful to volunteers Pat and Marty Bernstein, Gloria Furman, Samira Kawash, Marci Lucia, Bob Newsom, Lee Pardee, Basil Perkins, David Provost, Chris Singh, and Bruce Wilde who, with the kitchen team, set the bar for future volunteer work days.

The new equipment has arrived and is waiting to be installed when the church calendar permits.

We are hoping the congregation will appreciate the kitchen upgrade by helping to keep the clutter down.

Respectfully submitted,

Connie Newsom, team leader

Liz Davis, Facilities Maintenance Committee

Danny DiGiacomo

David Thebus, Facilities Maintenance Committee

Nancy Wolf, Facilities Maintenance Committee

Robert Petrillo (staff coordinator)

## **Membership Council**

The Membership Council has been hard at work welcoming the many newcomers that walk through our doors each Sunday and building community for all of our members. Judy Boals was our ushers and greeters coordinator this year. She makes sure there are smiling faces to greet our members, friends and visitors every Sunday morning. After the service Marty Bernstein and his team of volunteers head up the welcome table, answering people's questions and connecting them to other members of the congregation. By June we will have hosted four new member breakfasts, welcoming over forty new members to our congregation. We also coordinated our First U dinner groups in which over fifty people participated. During the Service of the Living Tradition we will honor four members and two Trustees for their years of dedication to our congregation. Lisa Kawamoto and Marty Bernstein have coordinated to make sure that pictures and bios of our new members are posted on the bulletin board in the Undercroft.

In addition to the work described above, the Membership Council has taken a strategy from our Forward First Plan. We have met multiple times with trustee, Sean Fisher, to narrow and articulate a goal and to strategize how

we can achieve it. We will be focusing on helping new members make deep connections within the congregation so that First U becomes their spiritual home for many years to come.

The \$500 membership budget was spent on materials for the welcome table, UU Pocket Guides for new members, a gift for Julie McKinney to celebrate her 60<sup>th</sup> year of membership and a cake to celebrate our new members.

A big thank you to the Membership Council and everyone who has participated in or helped with our programs. If you have been a greeter, or helped at the welcome table or coordinated a FUUDGE group or simply made a visitor feel welcome, we thank you for your time and support.

Rachel Michael – Chair  
John Lenker, Judy Boals, Lisa Kawamoto, Marty Bernstein,  
Eleanor Traubman (first half of the year), Garnett Losak – ex officio

## **Religious Education Council**

It has been a busy and productive year for the RE Council. With our amazing Director of Educational Ministries, Meagan Henry, we continued building on the strong foundation of years past. This year we saw growth in the size and depth of our programming. We currently have 86 children and youth enrolled in our programs. We welcomed three new staff members and introduced a new series of “Justice Sundays” to teach our young children about the justice work in our community and the larger world.

### **Justice Sunday**

This year, on holiday weekends, the K-6th graders came together to learn about a justice project from a member or friend of the congregation. In the fall, they helped make letters and cards of support for public libraries. In the winter they wrote letters of welcome to Latin American refugees. In the spring we learned about sustainability. We hope to expand and deepen our Justice Sunday series next year.

### **New Teachers**

Last summer we paid member, Amanda White, \$50 per Sunday for high-quality Summer Fun Activities for children ages 5 - 12 during the service. This was an experiment and was well-received so we plan to offer it again next summer. This year we had two teachers on our staff in addition to our wonderful Nursery Caregiver, Elizabeth Deterville. Stacey Anderson was our Toddler Room teacher, and Kate Tomlinson was our Pre-K teacher. We feel that a consistent presence in our classrooms for the youngest children is crucial to making welcoming and safe spaces.

### **OWL**

This year we held an Our Whole Lives class for middle school students. Since this is a year-long, in-depth curriculum and requires a large time commitment, we chose to have paid teachers, Eleanore Langknecht and Meredith White, teach the class. Next year’s K-1 and 4-5 OWL classes will be taught by trained volunteers: Denise Wharton and Peter Engel.

### **Summer RE**

In 2015 we held our VERY FIRST Summer Program for Children! Last summer children attending our summer services participated in fun explorations of the 7th Principle using the UUA curriculum “World of Wonder”. The program was a huge success largely thanks to our first Summer RE teacher, Amanda White. We plan on providing the same program this summer.

### **Youth Group**

Thanks to a generous donation of \$3,500 from the the Women’s Leadership Alliance, we were able to hire Rebecca Chin as Coordinator of Youth Ministry. She did an amazing job! So amazing that our youth are going to Romania for their annual pilgrimage! Our Youth Group has also spearheaded a community wide effort to provide school

supplies to Latin American refugees. We are so grateful to have Rebecca's hard work and leadership of our Youth Group.

A huge **Thank You** to all our volunteers, teachers and parents for their hard work and support. As always, the Religious Education Council welcomes your questions, comments and suggestions. Please contact us!

Becky Huffman, Chair  
June Wohlhorn, MariaSara Alcott, Kirsten DeFur  
Michele Ascione, Alexander Caputo, Meagan Henry, ex officio

## **Share the Plate Committee**

For many years, First Unitarian has shared a portion of its collection with non-profit organizations that work for justice in our local community and throughout the world. Since our Share the Plate program was initiated, we have given away more than \$10,000 annually. This year, we are thrilled to announce that we have sent \$14,228 to deserving organizations.

In an effort to create a more inclusive process for selecting Share the Plate beneficiaries and in the spirit of our mission to fulfill our responsibility to the larger society by promoting justice and peace, the Board of Trustees formed a Share the Plate Committee (SPC) which is charged with soliciting nominations from the congregation and selecting, from those nominations, an organization for the month. This new process has been in place for over two years now. While there has been some participation from the congregation, the Share the Plate Committee is thinking of more ways in which to solicit feedback and recommendations. This is an area of continued growth for the Committee.

Additionally, the Committee is eager to incorporate volunteer/community work into the financial contributions. While it is wonderful that the congregation is so supportive of local and global social justice efforts, the next step is to have this work lived out amongst community members.

The SPC is excited to work together and appreciates everyone's contribution to this effort.

### **Gifts since the 2015 Annual Report**

<b>May 2015</b>	<b>\$1,415</b>	<b>Magnolia Tree Earth Center</b>
<b>June 2015</b>	<b>\$680</b>	<b>SHARE</b>
<b>Summer 2015</b>	<b>\$912</b>	<b>CareCen</b>
<b>September 2015</b>	<b>\$1,273</b>	<b>Minister's Discretionary Fund</b>
<b>October 2015</b>	<b>\$1,157</b>	<b>UUSC Refugee Crisis Fund</b>
<b>November 2015</b>	<b>\$1,543</b>	<b>Ali Forney Center</b>
<b>December 2015</b>	<b>\$2,075</b>	<b>UUSC</b>
<b>January 2016</b>	<b>\$1,270</b>	<b>Liberal Religious Educators Association</b>
<b>February 2016</b>	<b>\$1,255</b>	<b>Roots Ethiopia</b>
<b>March 2016</b>	<b>\$1,892</b>	<b>Flint Child Health and Development Fund</b>
<b>April 2016</b>	<b>\$1,056</b>	<b>GrowNYC</b>

## Stewardship Team

The theme for the 2016-2017 stewardship campaign was Growing Home. This theme was selected by the members of the Team to recognize the growing membership and vitality of our congregation and the need it creates for increased financial resources. Key to our efforts was to raise money to support the board's determination to hire a full-time Sexton. Members of the congregation found this to be a compelling case for their support.

In anticipation of the campaign kick-off, we invited selected congregants to participate in one of two pre-campaign conference calls. These calls were designed to test our plan to increase pledging by \$50,000 this year. Approximately 40 people participated in the calls. We expect to use conference calling again next year.

The campaign kicked-off with a congregational brunch on February 28th. We estimate that approximately 100 people attended the brunch, which included presentations from members of the team, Board President, Lee Pardee, Rev. Ana and congregational singing. We received \$65,000 in pledges from approximately 50 households that day. Added to pre-launch canvassing of the congregational leadership including the Board, Deacons and Stewardship Team, the total at kickoff was \$120,000.

The campaign continued for 6 weeks with a variety of strategies. These included small group parties for young adults and the choir, a presentation for first time pledgers, emails, phone calls and letters.

As of this writing, we have \$275,000 pledged for next year. This is 87% to the goal of \$315,000. We anticipate reaching the goal before then of the next fiscal year. The goal represents an increase of 11.4% over the current-year pledge total.

	2016-17 as of 5/3/2016	2015-16	2014-15
<b>Pledge Goal</b>	\$315,000	\$290,000	\$275,000
<b>Total Raised</b>	\$275,000	\$282,800	\$275,700
<b>% of Goal</b>	87%	97.52%	100.24%
<b>Number of Pledges</b>	150	186	172
<b>Average Pledge</b>	\$1,800	\$1,500	\$1,600
<b>Median</b>	\$1,200	\$930	\$1,000
<b>Most Common</b>	\$1,200	\$600	\$1,000

The Stewardship Team is proud of the way members of our Congregation have responded to this year's campaign, and we look forward to doing even better next year.

David Garvoille - Co-Chair, Bruce Wilde - Co-Chair  
Lee Pardee, Koren Manning, Sarah Morgan, Peter Norling  
Marie Johnson, Marty Bernstein, Samira Kawash (follow up team)  
Garnett Losak, Staff Liaison

## **Sunday Meditation Circle**

The Sunday Meditation Circle puts into action the first purpose in our mission statement: to “inspire and empower people to grow spiritually.”

The session begins with brief opening words and a chalice lighting. We sit in silence for 30 minutes, then have a short time for sharing individual reflections. No experience or particular style of meditation is required; we provide brief mindfulness instruction, but all are welcome to engage in silence in whatever way they prefer.

Currently we meet in the Green Room, with about 8-12 sitting on any given Sunday. Anyone is free to come any time, so the group varies from week to week. In addition to about 20 regular or semi-regular participants, the meeting also serves those people who come early to church, those that finish their early duties before service time or come early by mistake. Some arrive seeking a quiet space to have something to do while waiting for the service. We also have frequent first-time visitors who are interested in sampling the full range of Sunday offerings.

We hope that the Sunday Meditation Circle will continue to grow and flourish. A period of silence provides a valuable respite in the hectic and noisy context of daily life. As the Sunday worship becomes more lively and interactive, a time of quiet inaction is perhaps an even more precious resource for ensuring that there are many forms of spiritual sustenance and rejuvenation offered in our community.

This year the meetings were led by a rotating team of facilitators: Mariasara Alcott, Dawn Brekke, Kay Corkett, Samira Kawash. Thanks to Laurel Lesio and Erik Hooks who also volunteered to lead sessions. We expect to expand our team of meeting leaders in the coming year.

Anyone interested in surrendering to a time of silence is welcome to attend on Sunday mornings at 10 am.

Samira Kawash

## **Sustainability Work Group**

The Sustainability Work Group (SWG) executed two projects for this church year:

1. Under the leadership of David Meadow, the church received an energy audit from the NYS Energy Research and Development Authority that focused primarily on the use of electricity and heating. This report will be used to review the detail of use and examine projects for improvement. The SWG will work directly with Elizabeth Davis of the Board of Trustees and the Facilities Management Committee, who has been asked to lead in this endeavor. David Meadow and Nancy Wolf will represent the Group.

2. The main project of the year was the planning and execution of a successful Sustainability Fair, held on March 20, 2016. The Fair was co-sponsored by Weaving the Fabric of Diversity. Ten informational tables were stocked and led by members of the Group and outside experts, such as those from the Littoral Society, the Department of Sanitation, Grow NYC and others. The tables were available immediately after the service until 3 PM. At 1 PM two Keynote Speakers addressed an audience of approximately 50 in the Chapel. Ishi Sahni of Grow NYC spoke about the organization's new sustainability center: Project Farmhouse. James White of St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Harlem spoke on Environmental Justice. The Congregation's Share-the-Plate donations for the month of April went to Grow NYC for Project Farmhouse. Thanks to planners Mary Most, Naarah Williams, David Meadow, Alison Derevensky, Rita Pearl, Mariasara Alcott, and many others who helped including Robert Harper for the design of the program flyer.

The Sustainability Group has established a Google Group for better communication. Anyone wishing to join this network should contact Naarah Williams at [naarahw@gmail.com](mailto:naarahw@gmail.com).

Nancy Wolf

## **Weaving the Fabric of Diversity**

Weaving the Fabric of Diversity (WFD) works on living our principles in action by looking inwards and outwards to work for justice and equality within our congregation and in the general community on racism, sexism, classism and LGBTQ issues. We form relationships outside our congregation's walls, create informational forums, and take part in actions of witness.

### **DINNERS**

**Children of Abraham / Muslim Dinner, Saturday, 11/14/15:** These dinners began in 2001 as a response to the violence shown against the Muslim community after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. Every year we become better acquainted with our guests and the event becomes warmer.

**Haiti: A Celebration – Dinner with Entertainment, Saturday, 3/12/16:** Our relation with Haitian grassroots 501(c)(3) organization FEDADSE (Federation des Associations pour le Developpement du Sud Est) continues to grow in warmth and scope. This year we jointly organized a fundraising dinner with entertainment. WFD and FEDADSE each supplied an emcee, food, and entertainment for the dinner. Funds raised will be used for reforestation projects in Haiti. All labor for these projects is volunteer.

**Juneteenth Service and Lunch, Sunday, 6/19/16:** This annual event includes the first Sunday summer service, followed by a picnic on Monroe Place. Juneteenth celebrates the day the last American slaves found out they were freed. Juneteenth has become a popular event for our congregation. This year's service will look at the struggle for justice in poetry and song. Lunch is pot-luck but starter foods are provided.

### **FORUMS:**

**Discussion on The Language of Oppression, Sunday, 10/25/15:** A moving discussion on choice of language and how it is used to define others as a tool to add status or to oppress. Labels stick, internally and externally, and words really can build us up or demean and hurt us.

**Forum on Syria: Where Do You Stand?, Saturday 2/6/16:** An open public forum on the humanitarian crisis and refugees. Speakers included Dr. Lara Beaty, Assistant Professor, LaGuardia Community College; Debbie Almontaser, Board Member, Muslim Community Network, Bruce Knotts, Director, Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office; Imam Samer Alraey, Chaplain, BMCC; Chaplain, Brooklyn College

**Discussion on Xenophobia, Sunday 4/3/16:** An anti-oppression discussion on the current political climate which has brought open slurs against immigrants, Muslims and other groups perceived to be different and outsiders.

**Discussion on Homelessness and Supportive Housing, Thursday 4/28/16:** Weaving proudly sponsored the first organizing meeting for the "Life Skills Empowerment" mentoring program, slated to start in the fall of 2016. This program enables single parent families who need a supportive social structure to remain in their own housing. Rita Zimmer of "Housing + Solutions", and Ann Teicher of the Life Skills Empowerment Program developed by the Beck Institute on Religion and Poverty at Fordham University presented the program and answered our questions. We also heard the experiences of two speakers from a UU church that has participated in this program. A second session is scheduled for May 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Sustainability Fair, Sunday 3/20/16:** Public event jointly sponsored by WFD and the Sustainability Work Group. Presenting organizations gave information on sustainable eating, recycling, farmers markets, renewable energy, and ecology of the seashore. (See more on this program in the Sustainability Work Group report).

### **ACTIONS OF IMMEDIATE WITNESS**

**Kyam Livingston Events: Monthly on the 21<sup>st</sup>.** Since August 2013 we have helped organize and taken part in monthly rallies or speakouts to protest the death of Kyam Livingston who was ill in a holding cell at Brooklyn Central Bookings and was denied medical help. She had been arrested on a minor matter and was never charged with a crime.

**YEARLY RETREAT – Saturday 6/4/15, 9:30AM-3:00PM on the Terrace at First U.** We extend an open invitation to First Unitarian members and friends to join us and lend ideas to help continue this social justice work in the coming church year.

**FUNDING** – Our funding this past year was \$1200 from the congregational program budget. This was supplemented with an additional \$105 raised from the Sunday sale of leftovers from the Haitian dinner, as well as \$185 from the proceeds of that dinner. We might have a small shortfall after our Juneteenth picnic.

**THANKS** - We would like to thank those in the congregation who attended our monthly meetings and worked with us in the kitchen during the dinners. We would especially like to thank Bob Bero for musical expertise for the Juneteenth Service, and MariaSara Alcott for hosting the Haitian dinner.

Bob Patterson, Co-Chair, Sam McKelvie, Co-Chair  
Rita Pearl, Derek Pearl, Enza Itri, David Provost  
Andrew Bongiorno, Chelsea Saunders, Robert Harper  
Carolyn McIntyre, Michael White, Mark de Solla Price  
John Lenker

### **Women's Leadership Alliance**

Have you heard that the Women's Alliance has a new name? Adding the word Leadership to the name of the Alliance reflects a strengthening of our continuing commitment to support women's vital role in society and encourage their highest aspirations. Supporting women's leadership, especially in the ministry, has long been part of the mission of the Alliance. To that end, last year we offered leadership grants to pursue job-related training to members of the Alliance and to women members of First Unitarian.

Ideas for new projects and goals were brainstormed at our retreat in September 2015. One of the aims resulting from that effort is to pro-actively design and facilitate events with other groups and committees at First U, including Twenties and Thirties (TnTs), Teens, Weaving the Fabric of Diversity and The Sustainability Work Group. We will also continue to support and mentor women across generations.

2015-2106 programs:

- Funded First U member Rebecca Chin as Youth Ministry Coordinator,
- Organized and co-led an event with the TnTs to encourage people to attend a screen and discussion of the film, *Suffragette*.
- Co-sponsored with the TnTs, "Feminist Comedy Night". Film clips featuring female comedians were screened, followed by readings of a selection of short writings by female comedians with discussion and much laughter.



- Presented a double-feature by screening the documentary film, *Dorothy Day: Don't Call Me a Saint* which was paired with a presentation by First U member and union spokesperson Vonda Brunsting on the union fight for a \$15 minimum wage.

The Alliance is planning a professionally facilitated skills development workshop which will encourage women to assume leadership roles. We will continue to offer our successful film series which highlights women's issues and achievements and support our long-standing book club which is as robust as it was when first started over 25 years ago. In addition, the WFD will support The Life Skills Empowerment Mentoring Project planned by First U next year (see elsewhere in this report). We will also fund the hiring of a ministerial intern to work with First U's Religious Education program.

This year a number of WLA members researched the Alliance archives located at the Brooklyn Historical Society which date back to the Civil War (when the name of our organization was the "Samaritan Alliance"). From that work, we are planning a Sunday Service for Women's History month next year, including an exhibit of photos and artifacts from the archives at the Brooklyn Historical Society.

Kathy Ivans – President, Nancy Witherell – Vice President  
 Pat Steele – Treasurer, Colleen Olson – Secretary  
 Kay Corkett

## **Worship and Music**

The Worship and Music Committee has undergone some major operational changes, though the scope of our work has remained the same. We are early adopters of the team approach to functioning in this congregation, something that the Forward Team, the Board, and Rev. Ana have supported. Late in the fall, after our wildly successful *Jazz and Pie* fundraiser, we lost two of our valued members due to over-commitment. This left us with only four active members to complete the church year.

We devised several teams to run the various aspects of our purview: holiday services, weekly Sunday morning duties, small group ministry, managing the cabaret fundraiser, and summer services. Each team has brought in support from other members of the congregation who have expertise or enthusiasm to share. In this way, we've been able to achieve our 2015-16 budget goals as well as to carry on the special worship events such as the Vespers service, Good Friday Communion, Community Seder, and Flower Communion, plus plan for the 11-week lay-led summer services calendar. This transition to a new model has not gone without hiccups: our main challenge has been communication gaps due to less contact among the core committee members. Still, the results are a less centralized and more efficient and empowered set of teams who are making things happen.

Cara Haft – Chair,  
 Robert Brackbill, Dawn Brekke, Bruce Wilde

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Many thanks to the following people who have turned in their pledge forms for the Fiscal Year 2016-17 beginning July 1<sup>st</sup> as of May 1, 2016.

Tom Check & Nancy Witherell  
Samira Kawash & Roger Cooper\*  
Barbara Dildine & Peter Norling  
Bruce & Coco Wilde  
Emily Pardee  
Carolyn Ellis & H.Lake Wise  
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Garnett Losak  
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Dawn Elane Reed\*  
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Dale Addington  
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Joe and Joy Gabriel\*  
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Jaye Nelia & Ari Hoogenboom, Jr.

\*Increase 10% or more from the previous year  
\*\*New Pledge

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**(718) 624-5466 [www.fuub.org](http://www.fuub.org)**  
**[office@fuub.org](mailto:office@fuub.org)**

**Rev. Ana Levy Lyons – Senior Minister**

**Meagan Henry – Director, Education Ministries**

**Robert Petrillo – Director, Congregational Services**

**Adam Podd – Director of Music**

**Garnett Losak – Director of Congregational Life**

**Dr. Donald W. McKinney – Minister Emeritus**

**Rev. Dr. Orlanda Brugnola – Chaplain Emerita**

**William Peek – Music Director Emeritus**

**Bert Eisenstadt – Director, Children’s Music**

**Rebecca Chin – Youth Coordinator**

**Carl Davis – Custodian**

**Elizabeth Deterville – Nursery Caregiver**

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